Jeffrey Epstein's connections to the modeling industry included regular visits at a leading agency, and donations to charities linked to its influential co-owner Faith Kates.

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Jeffrey Epstein preyed on young women with promises of modeling gigs for Victoria's Secret, and access to his high-powered connections in the fashion world.

For years, the perverted multimillionaire faced accusations that he sexually abused underage girls brought to him by Jean-Luc Brunel, the owner of the MC2 modeling agency who, according to civil court filings, housed his models in Manhattan apartments owned by Epstein. (Brunel has denied these allegations.)

But Epstein's ties to the industry run deeper than previously reported.

The financier regularly dropped by the New York offices of one of modeling's

biggest agencies—Next Model Management—according to sources familiar with the business, and lavished funds on charities connected to Next co-owner Faith Kates and her family. Brunel owned a 25 percent stake in Next with his brother, according to previously unreported court documents. And when Brunel's relationship with Next soured, he and Epstein tried to expand into deals with the renowned agency Elite Paris.

As a high-flying money manager in the 1980s, Epstein ran in the same circles as much of the fashion elite. He dated Ford Models star Eva Andersson, a former Miss Sweden, and flew everyone from Naomi Campbell to modelizing billionaire Ron Burkle on his private plane. According to a former associate, he partied around the globe with a group of playboys including Brunel, Spectrum Models co-owner James Rowan, and Fabrizio Lombardo, a close friend of Harvey Weinstein.

On Wednesday, the French newspaper *Le Parisien* reported that authorities in France are seeking Brunel as part of their probe into Epstein, and that they recently interviewed two women who say they were Brunel's victims in the late 1970s and early '80s. According to police, Brunel was in Paris this summer before he took off. He may be in Brazil.

Less public, however, was Epstein's relationship with Next model-maker Faith Kates. The 61-year-old Kates founded the business in 1989, and built it into one of the most respected agencies in the industry. Her partners at the time included Brunel and Lorenzo Pedrini, a former male model who appears in Epstein's little black book of contacts. Spectrum Models co-owner Joel Wilkenfeld later merged his agency with Kates' budding shop.

Through an attorney, Kates denied any business or financial relationship with Epstein. Her attorney said she had seen him “once or twice a year” over the last decade.

Regarded as a key player in the industry, Kates built Next into an empire with offices around the globe. The agency now represents musicians, actors, and social media stars, with a portfolio boasting beauties like Alexa Chung, Petra Nemcova, Miranda Kerr, Molly Sims, and Milla Jovovich.

The Long Island native is also known for her philanthropy, especially with the Ovarian Cancer Research Fund.

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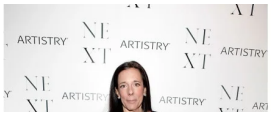

Faith Kates, President of Next Models, arrives at The 20th Anniversary of Next Models Hosted By Artistry at Marquee on February 13, 2009 in New York City.

Paul Morigi/Getty

According to one bio for *Advertising Week*, Kates has raised more than $30 million for ovarian cancer research, partially through "Super Saturday," an annual shopping fundraiser in the Hamptons that she invented with designer Donna Karan and the late *Harper's Bazaar* editor Liz Tilberis. The guest lineup has included Kelly Ripa and husband Mark Consuelos, Barbara Walters, Blake Lively, Christy Turlington and Edie Falco.

Kates is also no stranger to speaking out on modeling-industry issues and in service of her talent roster. In 2017, as the #MeToo movement was picking up, Kates discussed sexual harassment in the fashion sector by shutterbugs and agents.

At the time, she told *Women's Wear Daily* that she didn't hear much about abusive behavior but when incidents have

occurred, she would call the offending photographer herself. “I think Next is pretty powerful and the girls don’t get hit [on] that much anymore. I think the ones that do are the ones that don’t have great representation. We have a voice,” Kates told *WWD*.

“If you think ever that somebody’s bothering you on the set, you call us and somebody will be there in 15 minutes,” Kates claimed she tells her models. “We do what we can do to protect our people.”

Kates met Epstein through a mutual friend in the 1980s, a lawyer for the talent agent told The Daily Beast in a letter. She claims to have lost touch with him in the early 1990s and to have been reacquainted with him about 10 years ago, after his release from prison.

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Faith Kates attends Nate Berkus and Stefani Greenfield Celebrate GRAYCE by MOLLY SIMS at Raoul's on September 9, 2009 in New York City.

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“Mr. Epstein informed Ms. Kates and everyone else he knew that the reason he served a year in prison was because he was caught with a prostitute who, unbeknownst to him, was underage, and that even though he was innocent, he accepted a plea deal and agreed to serve a year in jail with work release solely to avoid the risk that he could be sentenced to 25 years in prison if he went to trial and fought the charges,” the attorney said.

He added, “Given the relatively light sentence Mr. Epstein received and the fact that my client never personally observed any inappropriate conduct by Mr. Epstein, she had no reason to disbelieve him.”

Four former Next employees told The

Daily Beast they saw Epstein in their offices, or answered phone calls from him, in the years between Next's founding in 1989 and Epstein's incarceration in 2008.

Timothy Priano, a makeup and hair agent who worked with the company, recalled being pulled into a meeting with Epstein and Kates at the New York offices in the late 1990s. Another employee said the money man was "in and out of our office constantly" in the early 2000s.

"I would only see him come in and go straight to her office with the door closed," that person said. "It was always like, 'Get Jeffrey Epstein on the phone.'"

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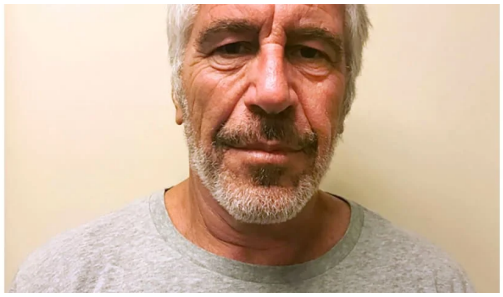

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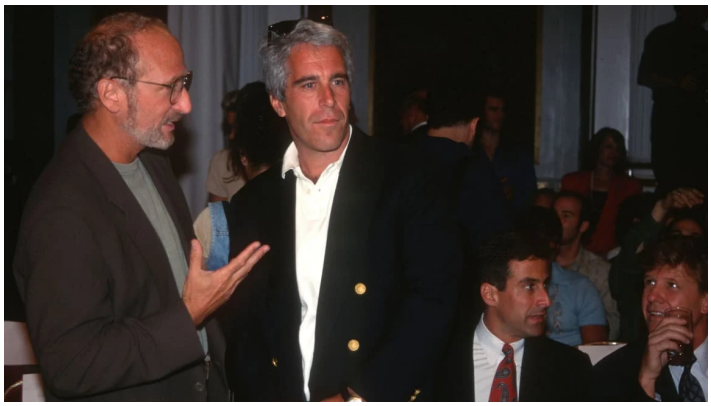
Another woman who worked at the New York office recalled answering the phone when Epstein called. She didn't recognize his name, and probably would not have remembered him at all, if another employee hadn't turned to her and remarked, "Oh, it's that creepy guy."

Kates' attorney said Epstein would drop by her offices to say hello "on occasion," but never took meetings there or had any business or financial relationship with Next.

Epstein was also reported to have dated Next model Alina Puscau, a *Playboy* covergirl and former Victoria's Secret Angel. In a May 2005 article, the *New York Post* called Puscau "a Romanian stunner" who "used to date reclusive billionaire Jeffrey Epstein." The report continued, "Epstein, who handles Leslie Wexner's fortune, helped land her a gig modeling for Wexner's Victoria's Secret

brand, we hear, and paid for her to live in high style."

One friend of Puscau reportedly told the *Post*, "Without Jeffrey she would never have gotten the Victoria's Secret job." Puscau declined to comment for this story.



Jeffrey Epstein attends the Victoria's Secret Fashion Show at the Plaza Hotel on August 1, 1995 in New York City.

Patrick McMullan/Patrick McMullan/Getty

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Epstein also dated another Next model

who later became a real estate agent, according to a former employee of the company, and her name appears in Epstein's flight logs. (A third Next model appears in Epstein's infamous address book, and was listed in Epstein's butler's notes under "visitor's massage." She was also in Epstein's flight logs in 2003, but it's unclear if she modeled with Next at the time.)

The model-realtor was photographed with Epstein at a launch party for Radar Online in May 2005, and snapped at a September 2005 event Epstein attended for the film *Capote*. She also attended a November 2004 gala for the Ovarian Cancer Research Fund, of which Kates was president of the board from 1994 to 2011.

Next and Kates say they had no knowledge of Epstein dating, socializing with, or flying on a plane with any of the agency's models.

Tax records for Epstein's nonprofit, the C.O.U.Q. Foundation Inc., show Epstein donated $50,000 to Kates' cancer charity in September 2006—two months after he was busted for soliciting teen girls.

And in 2012, as he issued a flurry of philanthropic press releases to repair his reputation, Epstein heralded another donation to Kates' group, declaring "Early Detection Of Ovarian Cancer Gets Substantial Support From Science Investor, Jeffrey Epstein."

The financier bestowed funds on Kates four years later, too, with a $10,000 donation to her latest nonprofit venture, The Women Global Cancer Initiative. As The Daily Beast reported, Epstein provided the funds through his secret charity, Gratitude America Ltd.

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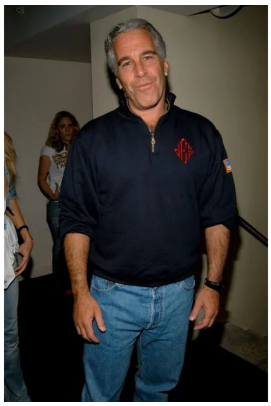
"Mr. Epstein's name was on a list with hundreds of other donors Ms. Kates solicited to make donations to her cancer charities," an attorney for Kates said.

"Indeed, Mr. Epstein was well known for his philanthropy, donating over $30 million through his private foundations to numerous charitable causes between 1998 and 2018."



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Epstein also recently funded a nonprofit where Kates' son, Dylan Kogan, worked. In 2017, Gratitude America sent $25,000 to the Junior Tennis Champions Center (JTCC) in College Park, Maryland, where Kogan worked as a "Summer Community Outreach Assistant Manager" in 2018. According to social media posts, Kogan coached at JTCC in 2017, too.

Tennis center CEO Raymond Benton told the *Diamondback*, a student newspaper at The University of Maryland, that his organization returned Epstein's total of $35,000 in donations with a check that was cashed by mid-May. Benton said

Gratitude America gave JTCC $25,000 in August 2017 and $10,000 in July 2018.

Benton did not return The Daily Beast's request for comment, nor did Will Hopton, JTCC's Director of Marketing. Of the JTCC donation, Kates told The Daily Beast, "My son volunteered in high school and I believe they gave back the donation."

Kates was not the only modeling industry insider Epstein targeted in his quest to repair his reputation. Another beneficiary was Eva Andersson, his model ex-girlfriend, who founded the Dubin Breast Center at Mount Sinai hospital in 2011. A year later, Epstein issued a press release publicizing his financial support of her effort. And, as The Daily Beast revealed, Epstein also donated to Harvard's Hasty Pudding Institute of 1770, of which Andersson's daughter, Celina Dubin, was a member.

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Epstein also teamed up with Jean-Luc Brunel, one of Next's founding partners, in a close relationship that is now under scrutiny. Brunel's name was kept out of the press at the time of Next's formation, after multiple models accused him of sexual assault in a 1988 *60 Minutes* feature. (Brunel denied these allegations.)

Jean-Luc Brunel

YouTube

But according to previously unreported court documents, Brunel and his brother, Arnaud, were 25 percent owners of the fledgling agency. Next also employed Arnaud as a consultant and paid him a $30,000-a-year salary, plus 3 percent of the company's annual revenue. In court documents, Kates said the brothers

"basically had control of the Florida Next office."

In 1996, Next sued the brothers, accusing them of "raiding" the agency's Miami offices to set up a rival agency of their own. In an affidavit, Kates claimed Jean-Luc and Arnaud solicited her models and staff to join their new agency—located just one block from Next's Miami headquarters—even as Jean-Luc continued to hold a 25 percent stake in Kates' company.

"Unless the defendants are stopped by this Court, they will continue to raid plaintiff's office, pirate plaintiff's employees and models, and divert all of the business from plaintiff to themselves," Next's lawyers wrote.

The parties settled later that year, and Brunel went on to open New York and Miami outposts of his French agency, Karin Models.

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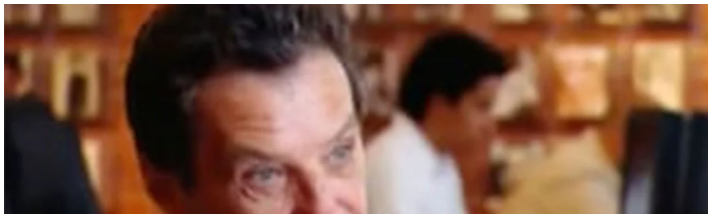
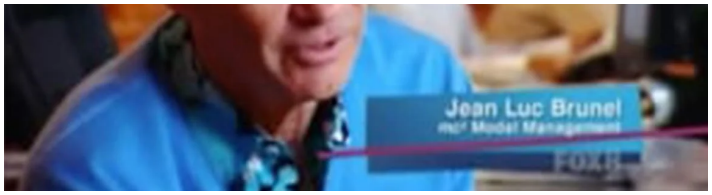
Asked about her relationship with Brunel, Kates told The Daily Beast: “He was a minority partner 30 years ago and after two years left the company, I haven’t seen him since then.” Court documents, however, show the Brunel family apparently worked for the company for at least five years. They are included on the company’s partnership agreement in 1989, and Arnaud’s name appears on official company documents until 1994.

The split between Brunel and Next did not seem to strain the Frenchman’s relationship with Epstein. Between 1999 and 2005, Brunel flew on the financier’s private plane more than 20 times, and was such a regular at his Palm Beach estate that staff recalled him whipping up his own meals in the kitchen. When Epstein was arrested in 2008, Brunel visited him nearly 70 times in jail.





Jean-Luc Brunel

Fox 8

One of Epstein's first public accusers, Virginia Roberts (now Giuffre), claimed in legal filings that Brunel was one of many powerful men whom Epstein forced her to sleep with in her years as his "sex slave." She also accused Brunel of using his agency to find foreign girls, obtain visas for them, and "farm them out to his friends, including Epstein."

"A lot of the girls came from poor countries or poor backgrounds, and he lured them in with a promise of making good money," Giuffre said in a 2015 affidavit. "Jeffrey Epstein has told me that he has slept with over 1,000 of Brunel's girls, and everything that I have seen confirms this claim."

A former Karin employee told The Daily Beast he frequently arrived at the New York office to find women waiting for him, saying Brunel had sent them. The women said Brunel had promised them test shoots and housing but—to the former employee's knowledge—they

never worked a single day in the industry.

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“Of course I surmised something is going on, because why, if you’re in this business, why are you going to waste your time with people who are not right for the agency and the image of the agency?" he said.

“Jean-Luc had a problem of the chase,” he added. “The chase and the conquer.”

Another former Karin employee told The Daily Beast that the company was barely profitable, and paid for any extra expenses with influxes of cash from Brunel’s brother and their business partner, Etienne des Roys. Soon after the two financiers pulled out in 2003, Brunel’s operation collapsed: The Paris

office filed to revoke Brunel's claim to the Karin trademark in 2004, and in 2005, he changed the name of the agency to MC2.

Similar to Giuffre's allegations, a former MC2 bookkeeper told the FBI in 2010 that Brunel had flown in teenage models from around the world to be housed in Epstein's Upper East Side apartments. She claimed the girls were loaned out to wealthy clients for up to $100,000 a night, and were not paid if they refused to be "molested." Brunel has denied these claims and says the woman was fired from his agency for embezzling company funds.

A booking agent told her Epstein was 'one of the most important people in modeling.'

As Brunel's businesses struggled in the early 2000s, Epstein seemed to be trying

to diversify. In 2004, he tried and failed to purchase the American arm of Elite Models, according to the *New York Post*. The next year, he extended a $1 million line of credit to Brunel to invest in a new agency with Elite Paris. Epstein's attorney, Darren Indyke, registered the new company to 457 Madison Avenue—the same address as the financier's investment firm.

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But this plan, too, was short-lived: According to court documents, Elite Paris called off the experiment after news began surfacing of Epstein's arrest. In fact, Brunel later sued Epstein, claiming rumors and news reports about his behavior had tarnished the agent's reputation and cost him millions of

dollars in lost business. The suit was still making its way through the courts when Epstein died.

“I strongly deny having participated, neither directly nor indirectly, in the actions Mr. Jeffrey Epstein is being accused of,” Brunel said in a statement when he filed the lawsuit. “I strongly deny having committed any illicit act or any wrongdoing in the course of my work as a scouter or model agencies manager."

When Epstein failed to make inroads in the modeling industry, he relied on his other business connections. Multiple aspiring models have accused Epstein of assaulting them after claiming he was a scout for Victoria’s Secret—the iconic lingerie brand owned by Epstein’s top benefactor and client, Les Wexner.

There is no evidence that Epstein ever served as a formal scout for Victoria’s Secret or L Brands, its parent company. Representatives for L Brands told *The New York Times* they do not believe Epstein was “ever employed by nor served as an authorized representative of the company,” and sources said they quickly notified Wexner when they learned Epstein was trying to involve

himself in catalog scouting.

Still, in 1997, model and actress Alicia Arden says Epstein invited her to his hotel room to audition for the Victoria's Secret catalog. When she arrived, she says, he grabbed her and tried to undress her until she ran away. Another accuser, former model Elizabeth Tai, said she was introduced to Epstein by a booking agent who told her Epstein was "one of the most important people in modeling."

"He said that this man is in charge of Victoria's Secret and he's going to change your life," Tai told the *New York Post*.

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Upon arriving at his New York mansion, Tai says, she tried showing Epstein her portfolio. Instead, he began taking off his

clothes and laid down naked on a massage table. She escaped by throwing a vibrator at his head and running out the door.

Three other models testified at a recent court hearing that Epstein used his modeling industry connections to lure them in. Another woman testified that Epstein had told her from a young age that she could become a model, while a second, Marijke Chartouni, said a friend promised her Epstein could use his connections to the art and fashion world to help her. Both women say Epstein sexually assaulted them.

A third woman, identified only as Jane Doe 3, said a friend first mentioned Epstein to her as a caring man who could help with her modeling career. When she eventually met him, at his New York home, she says he sexually assaulted her. Afterwards, she says, she became depressed and stopped going to castings. Five months after moving to New York City to pursue her dream of modeling, she left.

“I buried this deep within me, and all of the new occurrences that have come up in the media is what brought it back up for

me," she testified. "And I feel sickened and saddened that it took so many years, and God knows how many victims, for this to finally come out, but I'm thankful it did."

She added, "I'm just angry that he's not alive anymore to have to pay the price for his actions."

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